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HOWELL COBB PAPERS¹

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H. V. JOHNSON² TO HOWELL COBB

Ex. Chamber, Milledgeville, Ga.,
Jan. 10, 1854.

My dear Sir:

I thank you for your last letter. You need not fear that I misunderstood the object of your first letter in reference to Rutherford. I understood and appreciated it.

My appointments as far as I can learn have given as much general satisfaction as I could have expected. Disappointed applicants and their friends are more or less sore. But time will heal these wounds especially if the final result shall show that the appointments are judicious. You need not fear that I will attach undue importance to disappointed applicants. True, I hate as much as anybody to wound friends, but I think I have the nerve to meet responsibility when it is necessary.

It is rumored here that Gov. McDonald³ intends formally to withdraw his aspirations for senatorial robes. What will be the effect do you think? It will be an important development. You should be apprised of it and shape matters as you would have them, if you can.

I have read Douglass's report on the Territory of Nebraska. He takes the true ground I think, i. e., argues

¹ The first installment of the Cobb papers appeared in Vol. V. No. 1

² Herschel V. Johnson, U. S. Senator, 1848-1849; Judge of the Supreme Court, 1849-1853; Governor of Georgia, 1853-1857; Confederate States Senator; he was a Southern Rights Democrat on the issues of 1850-1851, but Cobb supported him for Governor; Candidate for the Vice-Presidency on the Douglas ticket, 1860.

³ Charles J. McDonald, Governor of Georgia, 1839-1843. Defeated as Southern Rights Candidate for Governor, 1851 by Cobb. Associate Justice Supreme Court of Georgia, 1856-1861.

that the compromise of 1850 covers all the questions that can be raised touching the interest of slavery. I mean I have read a part of the report, all that bears on this question. If his report shall be sustained by Congress, we may hope for a future of quiet and repose. It will moreover plant the Admr. and the National Dem. firmly in the ascendancy.

Have you any news of interesting developments at Washington? Do you think Davis will be elected U. S. Senator? In that event will Pierce probably call Gov. McD[onald] to the Cabinet?

I had a letter from Judge Lumpkin a day or two ago—expresses himself well pleased with my appointments.

JNO. H. LUMPKIN TO HOWELL COBB

Rome, Ga., Jan. 18, 1854

Dear Cobb:

. I was with McDonald¹ a good deal while he was here, and he was in fine health and in most excellent spirits. In fact I have never seen him when he was on better terms with himself and with most of the world. He has not much fancy for our friend Col. Underwood and I think he has not a great deal of respect for Dr. Singleton. I had no conversation with him in regard to the position of United States Senator, nor did he give me any intimation that he expected to go into Mr. Pierce's cabinet. But William Fort of this place a nephew of Dr. Fort, and who is the intimate friend and supporter of Gov. McDonald, informs me that Jefferson Davis is in correspondence with McDonald, and that McDonald informed him confidentially that he would go to Milledgeville immediately this week, and if he could control some three or four of his friends and induce them to go into your support for United

¹ Charles J. McDonald.

States Senator, that he would then tender back to the party the nomination and go in publicly for your election, and if this was successful, he had no doubt of your election to the United States Senate¹ and that he would be appointed Secretary of War in the place of Jefferson Davis who would also go into the Senate from the State of Mississippi. He further informed me that Brown was an applicant for the Senate from Mississippi, and that this difficulty would have to be accommodated, by providing for Brown in some other way. I feel confident that this arrangement will be carried out. And if so the party in Georgia will be once more thoroughly united and cemented.

G. W. JONES² TO HOWELL COBB

Washington, February 16, 1854.

Dear Cobb:

Well here we are in the midst of the slavery excitement again, the finality of the Compromise to the contrary notwithstanding. The Nebraska bill and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise being the question upon which all has been gotten up. A most impolitic and mad movement for the South, no practical good can come of it because there is none in it. Calm, peace and repose is what the South—the country, most need. I do not know who has been the adviser. Certainly the Southern men were not generally consulted, nor were the Northern men if I am advised rightly.

It has been concocted by politicians, for political and personal purposes. I do not know a Southern man who would

¹ The election of a U. S. Senator occurred on January 23, 1854. The Whig incumbent, Dawson, was a candidate for re-election and received the solid support of the Whigs. The Democrats, of whom the great majority were of the Southern Rights wing of the party, controlled the legislature. The Union Democrats voted for Cobb, but he never received more than a small minority of the votes cast. Alfred Iverson, of Columbus, an extreme Southern Rights Democrat, was finally elected. McDonald was also a candidate and in the early ballots received the votes of a majority of the Democrats. He was finally dropped in favor of Iverson.

² George Washington Jones, Congressman from Tennessee, 1843-1853; 1855-1859.

have advised the movement, if he had been consulted beforehand. Some of the best and most discreet are of opinion, privately, that the movement is madness and must result injuriously to the South. But it is upon them. On the other hand our best and most reliable friends from the North, are shivering, and some who will come square up to the work, when called upon to vote will do so with the conviction upon their minds, that the act will work their political destruction. That it will be a self sacrifice for the sake of the party. They say one strong argument, if not the principal one which prevailed, in inducing Northern men to acquiesce in the compromise, was that it was a finality, that all was now settled. The abolitionists and free soilers said, no—that the demands and exactions of the slave-holder were never appeased nor satisfied. That some new demand would be made, and continue to be made, and too soon has the verification come, they now exultingly say, I or we told you so. Chase, Giddings, & Co., are delighted with the prospects before us. They fight hard against the repeal, but in their hearts, I verily believe they desire the repeal. It will put into their mouths the charge against the South of bad faith. What possible good can result to the South from this renewed agitation?

Cobb, what is called the Democratic party is this day in a worse condition than either of us ever saw it before. Without any recognized head, no bond of Union to bind it together and no issue with its adversary as formerly, it is blundering along, under an administration which does not possess the confidence and cordial good will of a tithe of the party. I fear the administration cannot get through respectably—that it will let down is the opinion of some of our best friends. Gen. Pierce is treating the true and the tried of the party as his mere vassals, who as a matter of duty would support him or be read out as renegades—and taking his Counsellors, Cabinet advisers from the two extremes

of fire-eaters and freesoilers, and a quite recently proselyted Whig, and in addition bestowing his patronage upon persons of the same sort almost exclusively, has cooled the ardor and personal regard for him of a host of the best men who were most cordial and sincere in his support in 1852. I fear we have been mistaken in the man, in his capacity, in his executive administrative talent. I fear he is not equal to the tasks imposed upon him. In former phrase that he is *over craped* and with all that he is rather too much of a Yankee. I fear that we are in for it. That would perhaps not be so bad, if it was not for the prospect of a complete rout of the Democratic party. From appearances and developments thus far this bids fair to outstrip all former administrations in large appropriations and extravagant expenditures. And the Democrats at the close of Gen. Pierce's four years will be forever estopped from commending the Democratic party for its economy, to the support of the people as well as from charging upon the Whigs extravagance. Perhaps I am a little too gloomy and desponding. I hope so, and that all will yet be well.

Write and let me know your news.

ROBERT TOOMBS¹ TO HOWELL COBB

Washington, D. C., Aug. 1, 1854.

Dear Cobb:

. . . . The Governor has been backing down on Cuba, but the late news from Spain looks favorable to great changes there, which they think here will aid our objects on Cuba. Pierce vacillates—we have the old river and harbour bill before us. It will pass I think but Pierce assures us he will veto. We have had a warm debate on it for the last two days when I had to “fight all around the ring” against it.

¹ U. S. Senator 1851-1861.

DAVID COLLINS¹ TO MR. & MRS. HOWELL COBB

Dec. 10, 1854.

Agreeable to yours and Mrs. Cobb's request I know rite you a few lines about the crop and helth of this place at this time. We are all in tolerable helth. the crop turned out some better than I expected. We hav a plenty of meat for another year and corn enought, the present crop of cotton is also better than I thought it would be. I hav sent off 168 bags, the crop will be between 200 and 210 bales. I shall be able to turn over to the next overseer a fine stock of hogs for another year, and a good stock of cattle, but rather a sorry stock of mules, owing to a good potion of them being verry old though having a plenty to feed on. I think he can make out verry well.

JAMES BUCHANAN TO HOWELL COBB

Hornby Castle
Yorkshire, England, Jan. 3, 1855

My dear Sir:

You will be astonished at the place from which this letter is dated. It is the castle of the Duke of Leeds where with my niece I have been passing a few of the holidays, after a long and laborious time in London.

In answer to your favor of the 5th. ultimo, I can truly say that I have no friend in America more worthy of my entire confidence, or on whom it would be more freely bestowed than yourself. In truth, however, the subject of your letter demands no confidence. From the period of the last Presidential election I have uniformly declared to all inquiring friends that I would not again be a candidate for the Presidency; & from this I cannot depart. I have always thought it was a melancholy spectacle to see old men struggling on the political arena for honors & offices, as

¹ Collins was an overseer on one of Mrs. Cobb's plantations.

though this world was to be their everlasting abode. I desire, should kind Heaven prolong my days, to pass the remnant of them in the tranquility & retirement of a private citizen. I shall be sixty-four years of age, should I live until the 23rd. of next April, & at the end of the next Presidential term will have nearly completed my three score & ten. The people of the United States, unless under most extraordinary circumstances, should never elect a man of such an age their President.

In forming this resolution, I was not influenced, in the slightest degree by previous disappointment. On the contrary I feel conscious that I have enjoyed more than my share of public honors & offices. I shall ever feel the deepest interest in the success of the Democratic party & as a private citizen shall give both its measures & its men a decided support. It will surely rise again from its recent defeat & Anteus-like will rise from the earth with greater strength than it had before its fall. There are several younger men in the United States quite as well qualified as myself to discharge the duties of the Presidential office, among the more prominent of whom, without flattery, I would class yourself; & nothing but the partiality of friendship could point to me as capable of commanding a larger electoral vote than some of them. It is true that as a great portion of my life has been devoted to the maintenance of the Constitutional rights of the South, I may be popular in that region; but for this very reason I should lose votes in the North.

I have never liked my present situation & accepted it with very great reluctance. I shall remain, according to my agreement with the President during the term of two years which will expire at the latter end of August next & will not probably return until October. Though not very happy, I am content with my condition & endeavor to make the best of it.

The British people, although somewhat jealous of our

rapid advance, especially in commerce & manufactures & feeling an undefined apprehension of our rapidly increasing power & numbers, yet indulge in self gratulation that they have given birth to such a nation as ours. They enjoy a free press & free speech, & life, liberty & property are perfectly secure under their system. The present war against Russia is emphatically a war of the British people into which the Government entered most reluctantly. They consider it a war of freedom against despotism, whether rightly or wrongly, & are, therefore, quite indignant that their "Cousins on the other side of the Atlantic" should appear to sympathize with the Czar. The unnecessary & very severe articles against them in the Washington Union, whilst seriously interfering with my negotiations, cannot it seems to me do any possible good. It is considered the Presidential organ; & for this reason ought to feel itself under a wise restraint in regard to the language if not the matter which it employs against foreign Governments. That of England is bad enough, but when compared or rather contrasted with the Government of the Continent, it is rather to be admired than condemned. The English Liberals in Parliament with several of whose leaders I am intimately acquainted are sincerely attached to us & view our institutions with admiration. Whilst steady in their efforts to extend the suffrage & remove abuses, they do not believe that a Republic would be suited to England.

The public speaking in Parliament, is not, in my opinion, equal to that in Congress.

JAMES GARDNER TO HOWELL COBB

Augusta, Ga., June 12, 1855.

Dear Cobb:

Your brother tells me that you requested him to see A. H. Stephens, ascertain his precise views and position in the present canvass, and write you; and as I had a full conver-

sation with Stephens and he did not, he has requested me to answer your inquiries.

I talked freely and fully with Stephens last Sunday. Others were in the room which prevented my putting direct questions to him of a character which would when answered, as I know he would answer confidentially, have placed him fully in line with us. But he said enough to *convince me thoroughly* that he is with us heart and soul not for the campaign only, but for the war. In the canvass next year he will be one of us and a part of us, to all intents and purposes a Democrat.¹ He says our platform was greatly better than he expected of us—he finds no fault with it barring its laudation of democratic principles and measures, which grates a little on his old Whig sensibilities. Even the endorsement of Gen. Pierce's administration he fully concurs in, as it leaves the Reeder² imbroglio untouched. He says he will give to the position of the Convention on the slavery question his cordial support, and will make no assault on either the state or federal administration. He cannot from personal considerations vote for Johnson,³ but if we had nominated *any other man of our party* he would have voted for him and rallied every man in the state he could influence to his support.

You can safely, judiciously, and with the utmost propriety invite Stephens into your district. He wants Johnson elected, and says that if he could go in by 30,000 majority it would have a grand moral effect. He has no sympathy with the Columbus movement, discountenanced it when at Columbus, and refused his co-operation. He regrets however our program of an adjourned Convention and [that] another nominee could not have been called out. We would he thinks, have secured many thousand votes for us that Johnson cannot possibly get.

¹ Stephens and Toombs entered the Democratic party in 1855. The bulk of the Whigs went into the Know-Nothing Party.

² Andrew H. Reeder, appointed by President Pierce as territorial governor of Kansas in 1854.

³ H. V. Johnson, then candidate for re-election as Governor of Georgia.

(What a pity Johnson was so selfish, and for his future popularity so shortsighted.)

Stephens did not get my letter till Monday, 4th inst. He would have answered it, but none of the Taliferro delegation went to Milledgeville. He meant to send his answer by one of them.

I think Andrew J. Miller, from what he told me in Stephen's presence, will take position with him and us.

J. J. FIELD TO HOWELL COBB

Marietta, Ga., July 24, 1855.

Dear Sir:

I left Dahlonega yesterday morning. The Know-nothings were just preparing to start to the Gainsville convention. One of their plans to secure your defeat I understand from several of them is whilst at that convention to take up a collection to defray the expenses of traveling agents, or missionaries throughout your district. The amount I understood they wanted for that purpose is five thousand dollars. It is very desirous on the part of your friends in Lumpkin that you be certain to be at the General Musters throughout that Brigade, and if possible bring Mr. Stephens with you to as many of the musters as he can possibly attend, but especially have him to make a speech at Dahlonega. I think a speech from our friend Ellick¹ would have a good effect in Lumpkin County. The Know-nothings, as you doubtless are aware are plentiful in Lumpkin and Forsyth counties, much more so I hope than elsewhere in your district. It will be well for you to give special attention to these two counties, though I can't think you are in any danger.²

¹ i. e., Alex H. Stephens.

² Cobb was elected to Congress in November, receiving 9,203 votes against 5,277 for his Know-nothing opponent.

HOWELL COBB TO HIS WIFE.

Washington, D. C., Dec. 19th, 1855.

My dear Wife:

. . . . We are still without a speaker, and perhaps no nearer to it than at the start. At least I see no evidence of an early solution of the difficulty. For the last two days we have had a good deal of speaking, which may perhaps hasten the organization. At this moment we are now voting the sixty-fifth time and no appearance of an election. In 1849 I was elected on the sixty-third vote and on the third Saturday of the session. So you see we have had more votes taken but not so many days consumed. The reason of this is there has been less speaking. As yet there has been no excitement and until we have a storm, I think we will have no election. My own opinion is that Banks will ultimately be elected, though they will have to adopt the plurality rule to effect it, unless the debate drives the *pretended* national Know-nothings of the North to the support of Banks. The truth is that those of us here know and see as little through the mist as those at a distance, and therefore, you will have to wait patiently for the final announcement of the result through the telegraph & the newspapers. . . .

The Washington Correspondent to *The New York Herald*¹

Washington, Dec., 22, 1855.

The Speech of Howell Cobb, on Friday, was designed wholly for party purposes, and to keep steady those members who have thus far given their votes for Mr. Richardson. There were apprehensions entertained before the meeting of the House on Friday that the Democratic vote would be divided after the first ballot, and thrown for some new man. The name of Cobb was mentioned in connection with the subject, which he hearing, induced him to lead off

¹ In the issue of December 25, 1855.

in a speech of great partizan strength, which, in all probability, will have the effect to continue things as they are. Mr. Cobb has been earnestly appealed to by many members for privilege to use his name, alleging as a reason for the request that he could be elected Speaker, and that there were no hopes whatever for Richardson. Their reasoning was perfectly sound, and the object attainable; but no impression can be made on Cobb to induce his becoming a candidate for the Speakership. Should Banks be elected, Mr. Cobb will have the satisfaction of knowing that he possibly might have prevented so sad a result, and one that would be regretted by every loyal American. There are those belonging to the Democratic party who think that Mr. Cobb can render greater services by being on the floor, and taking the lead in important questions, as they may arise. This consideration evidently governs Mr. Cobb's actions at this moment, and hence the country must be prepared to regard him as the leader and oracle of the Congressional Democratic party.

The Washington Correspondent to *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.¹

Washington, D. C., Dec. 22, 1855.

The mail that carries this will bear to you also a copy of the Union, containing a report of the speech made in the House of Representatives on Friday last, by Howell Cobb. As delivered it was a great speech, in the fullest sense of the term. I have not read the report fully, and therefore cannot say how faithfully it is rendered; but, even if every word is there precisely in the order in which it was uttered, it must still fail to convey to the reader an adequate idea of its excellence, and fail especially to account for the powerful effect the speech had upon the House. It requires that you should have been present, to understand this. The most

¹ In the issue of December 25, 1855.

skillful reporter cannot transfer to paper the grand, fervid and impressive manner of the orator—the telling emphasis—the significant gesture—the clarion voice—the attending circumstances; and the other adjuncts of the subject and the occasion; and yet these, as well as the lucid exposition and the unanswerable argument, from the iron logic of which there is no escape, are necessary to a full appreciation of the force of this great effort. To give you, and if you think it desirable, the readers, of the *Pennsylvanian* also, a few notes of explanation on this subject, is my present purpose.

For the greater part of two days, a Southern Know-nothing had had the floor. He, as well as others of his party, had affected to hold the Democratic organization—brave in purpose but few in numbers, responsible for the condition of affairs in the House, “because the resolutions of the Democratic caucus, interpose barriers against all approaches by the Know-nothings from the South.” This had been argued so incessantly, and by a few of the abler men of the National “American” party with such plausibility, as to induce a feeling of satisfaction, if not of triumph, amongst the adherents of that cause. It was to expose this pretext, and further to assert the true dignity of the Democratic position, that Governor Cobb took the floor. To read his speech aright, these two purposes must be kept all the time in mind. You will perceive how fully and completely he established the fact, that the barriers were erected by the Know-nothings themselves, and that it is the result of their work that Georgia and the entire South do not speak upon the floor of the House, in one voice.

In developing his argument on this point, he took occasion to tear away the mask behind which “National” Know-nothingism seeks to hide its most repulsive features. He did not, and would not, discuss the vague and vapid generalities of the Philadelphia platform, on the subject of civil and religious freedom, but he would discuss here, as he did at home, the principles contained in their tests and oaths. As

you will observe, he did not enlarge his argument here, nor amplify it at all. It was not required, for there was a whole volume of argument in his simple discrimination, between their published principles and their OATHS. He rang out this word OATHS with power and a significance that no mere printed words can possibly express.

The second great purpose of Mr. Cobb was as forcibly and clearly effected as the first. It was to establish this great truth, that a Democrat, and especially a citizen of the South, who resists the assaults made upon the Constitutional rights of the States, can form no honorable alliance with those who are striking at the Constitutional rights of the citizen—Catholic and foreign-born. In the maintenance of this principal consists the true dignity of the position of the Democratic members of the House.

Having disposed of the two propositions to which I have alluded, Mr. Cobb concluded the principal part of his speech, with an eloquent refusal to abandon the Democratic organization, for a mere temporary success; and should I live a thousand years, I think I could never forget the impressive fervor of voice and manner with which these words were spoken:

“Waive the Democratic organization?” said he. “To-day, though reduced in numbers on this floor, that party occupies before the country a prouder position than it ever did before. My southern friends, do you ask me to abandon the Democratic organization in the hour in which purged of the last Free-Soil sentiment that disturbed its harmony and destroyed its power and usefulness, it is entering a new career of triumph of Democratic and Constitutional freedom? I cannot respond to your request. Believing, as I do in my honest judgment, that the best interests of this country, if not its very existence, depends on the preservation of the National Democratic party, I will never abandon that organization as long as the banner which floats over it has inscribed upon its fold the principles to which I

am in body and mind thoroughly and unfalteringly devoted now and forever."

There were a few incidental points which perhaps it may be well to notice. The Kansas bill, and its true interpretation, had been introduced into the discussion. In order to convict the Northern Democrats of inconsistency in this respect, Mr. Cox, of Kentucky, a Southern man, resorted to the extraordinary expedient, of calling up certain Free-Soilers to testify against their Democratic competitors in the Congressional canvass. It was in rebuke of this, that Mr. Cobb, directing his index finger towards the seat of Mr. Cox, with flashing eye, and impassioned sarcasm, uttered a sentence in the speech, which without a knowledge of the foregoing occurrence, may not be thoroughly understood. I allude to this passage: "There was no man in that House who would have risen before a Southern constituency, and called to the stand Free-Soilers to testify against the men who have fallen in defense of the Constitutional rights of the South." Upon this subject of discrepancy in the interpretation of that bill by different public men, you will find the following conclusive response: "I trust that I shall be able to show, at the proper time, that although there are differences of opinion on immaterial points, yet, that upon the great, leading, practical idea, contained in the bill, there is but one voice and one sentiment in the Democratic party. Adopt what theory you please; carry out what views you please; entertained by gentlemen of the Democratic party, they all come at last to the great practical point,—that the will of the people of the Territory shall control and decide the question of Slavery."

There was one other incident to which I wish to direct your attention, not so much because of its importance, as on account of its happy manner and effect. It is not to be found at all in some of the newspaper versions of the speech, and not accurately reported in others. Mr. Cox remarked, while Governor Cobb was speaking, that the Democrats could vote for one of his party without endorsing any prin-

ciple of the Know-nothings, as they might vote under protest. To this Mr. Cobb made the following impromptu and felicitous reply: "I prefer to embody my protest in my vote; it is easier understood by the country, requires fewer explanations hereafter; and is more acceptable to my heart." With this I will conclude an epistle that has gone far beyond the length I first designed, hoping that it may have the effect to present to you in a stronger light, some passages of a remarkable speech, which in the absence of the circumstances attending its delivery and in the hurry incident to your arduous vocation, may have escaped the notice they deserve. W.

GEO. H. MARTIN TO HOWELL COBB.

Philadelphia, Pa., Dec. 25, 1855.

My dear Sir:

I have intended for some days to have written you to say how delighted your friends in this region were to see you again in the councils of the nation, fully armed for the sustainment of the principles which are to test the capacity of man for self government. I am this morning in the columns of the "Union" reminded of that intention by your *brilliant* effort on Friday last. Its praise is in the mouth of everybody. It is the *blow* of the session, its stunning effect on the opposition is clearly manifest here, if followed up by the steady action of our friends, great good will result. I view it as the program of the next Presidential fight.

I hope you will be able during the session to spend a few days with us in Philadelphia. I promise you a warm reception, not only from your personal friends but the great mass of our community.

HOWELL COBB TO HIS WIFE.

Washington City, Jan. 5, 1856.

My dear wife:

. The contest for speaker continues without any perceptible change and no one sees any better prospect of an election than at the start. I still adhere to the opinion that Banks¹ will ultimately be elected, though there is no other reason for the opinion than the force of mere conjecture. A motion is just made to adjourn and as it is Saturday evening, I think, it will pass. I therefore conclude my letter, & moreover have nothing to write about.

R. M. GOODWIN TO HOWELL COBB

New Brunswick, N. J., Jan. 14th, 1856.

My dear Mr. Cobb:

I have been intending to pay you a visit at Washington on my way to Georgia, but have been deterred from doing so by the disorganized condition of the House of Representatives. Will you ever elect a speaker? I have read the message of the President. It is excellent and all on *paper* we could desire, but with me there lacks one great essential (not to make it a better production) which he cannot give. I do not believe in him: I do not believe he would carry out in practice that he conveys to us in writing. This is the great difficulty that Mr. Pierce labors under with the people of this country. They have not confidence in him and they will not believe him. I am truly sorry that things should be so with the head of the great Democratic party, but as far as my observation has led me, I am constrained to say that this administration has not the confidence of the Democracy,

¹ Nathaniel P. Banks, Congressman from Massachusetts, 1853-1857. Speaker of the Thirty-Fourth Congress; elected on the 133rd ballot.

nor will it ever have. The Democratic party is as strong now as it was in 1852 and if united as it was then is probably stronger. A union is all that is desirable to ensure success in 1856. To effect this union must be by a rejection of Mr. Pierce's claim to a re-election. If *he* is renominated, the Democratic party is certainly destined to defeat and disgrace. I know of no condition of things that could possibly re-elect him and it is well for the Democracy to look elsewhere for their standard bearer.

I am certainly disposed to support the administration as a Democrat, and all measures emanating from it ought to be sustained by the party as from the administration placed there by them, but further I would not go.

It is needless to give reasons, and how Mr. Pierce has placed the Democratic party in its present unpleasant and divided position. You know them as well if not better than I do. But I look upon him as having violated his inaugural, as having caused the disruption of the party, as being the cause of forming of the Know-nothing party, and in fact the dissolution of the integrity of the Democracy, of his having demoralized them in every particular.

I am a Democrat of forty years standing and for that space of time have cast my vote only for a Democrat. I am now an old man, having my three-score years. I will I hope die in my Democratic faith and hope to live to witness many of its triumphs. But if this man Pierce is again to be thrust upon us, if I live I will not vote for him.

If I were with you, I could relate things that I know of, but will not do to put in a letter. So I will wait until another opportunity. I should like to be a member of the Cincinnati Convention, if I can be sent there with a knowledge by those who send me that under no circumstances will I support Mr. Pierce. F

WM. S. ROCKWELL TO HOWELL COBB.

Milledgeville, [Ga.,] 20 Jany. 1856.

My Dear Sir:

. The Democratic party of Georgia do not believe that the will of the people of the Territory shall control and decide the question of slavery. As a proof of it read a copy of the preamble and resolutions introduced in the House by Gen. Smith of Jones. When we meet face to face I will give you the secret history of those resolutions. It would not surprise me if the Legislature of Georgia appropriated funds to help prevent the '*people*' of Kansas from declaring that it should be a *free* state

Make no false issues. The *citizens* of a territory according to the Democratic creed may control the matter, but not according to my doctrine. No number of *citizens* or *people* have a right to take away my property so long as we live under the Constitution. If we are forming a government *de novo* they may say I and others shall not hold slaves, but we have also the right to say that we will depart from such a government and take our property with us. Nor is there any such thing as *free* territory belonging to the United States and the distinction which the Democrats in Congress take between States and Territory would be laughed at in a school boy.

All territory derives its character as to occupation from the [owners?] The Territory of the United States belongs to all the States, slave and free; it is therefore *slave* territory and not free—because all have a right of occupancy. And if the free community steal or trespass on the property of the slave-owner, horse or negro, Congress is bound to protect it. Just as much as Congress is bound to protect your goods or mine on the high seas against the *free booter* and pirate who says that the ocean is *free*. . .

HOWELL COBB TO HIS WIFE

Washington City, February 1, 1856¹

My dear Wife:

. . . . You will see that the President has sent in his message. Mr. Stephens and myself urged it upon him, and as I said to you before, he was startled at the idea at first, but ultimately acted upon it, and the whole party sustain him in his course. If he had had bold counsellors from the beginning, he would not be in the position he is, and I expect he begins to think so himself. The credit is given to the President himself for the boldness of the move and that is right. I don't know which was most astonished when the message was delivered, his friends or his enemies—all were taken by surprise. This is the advantage of the head of a party doing a thing first, and consulting about it afterwards. Had he consulted too many there never would have been unanimity.

JOEL BRANHAM TO HOWELL COBB

Eatonton, Putnam Co., Ga., April 10, 1856

My dear Sir:

I presume you intended your letter on the matter of the Presidential Election for my brother, Doctor Henry Branham. As it was addressed to me, I will answer it. The manifest policy of the Democratic Party is to unite on the strongest sound man. I have no doubt (with the exception of Kentucky and Maryland) all the Slave states would vote for Pierce, Douglass or Buckhannan. The only question for the party to determine is, which of these men is the strongest. Buckhannan is unquestionably the man. He can get the vote of Pennsylvania, and possibly New York, N.

¹ This letter is dated in the original Jan. 1, but this is probably an error, as the letter appears to refer to President Pierce's message of Jan. 24, in which he had condemned the activities of the Free-Soll element in Kansas. See T. C. Smith, *Parties and Slavery* pp. 149-151.

Jersey, N. Hampshire and Maine. If Mr. Buckhannan is nominated the Democratic vote of the South will be larger than it has ever been. I have more confidence in your personal management of the affairs of the Democratic party than any fifty that will be at the Cincinnati Convention. I speak but the language of hundreds of your friends when I say you ought to be there. You will allow me to speak candidly to you. I believe you to be an *honest publick man*, and the best and safest *manager the party has, North or South*. There are so few to be relied on as having sound policy and discretions in such an important matter, that we in Georgia who know you well, think and feel that all would be well if your council and advice could prevail in the Convention. It is truly an important and ominous period in the history of our country, and all true patriots should unite to save the Union and maintain the constitutional rights and equality of the states. With Buchanan this may be accomplished. I honestly believe he is the only man that can succeed.

JAMES BUCHANAN TO HOWELL COBB

Wheatland, [Pa.,] 10 July, 1856.

My dear Sir:

I have received your kind favor & am sorry to learn that the article in the Lancaster Intelligencer about Col. Benton has produced such an unhappy effect in Washington. It only illustrates the truth of the remark that grave consequences often flow from the most trifling causes. I am as little responsible for this article as I am for "squatter sovereignty," although my friends in the South charge me with both & this with equally good reason. I never saw the article and knew nothing of it until some days after it appeared in the Intelligencer. The editor has a correspondent in St. Louis, who has written him letters gratis for publication for a number of years & these have been quite interesting & in-

creased the circulation of his paper. It appears this correspondent who went from Lancaster & whose relatives, all excellent Democrats, reside in the neighborhood, is a strong Benton man. The Editor told me he thought it was bad policy in the Washington Union to be assailing Col. Benton or any other man who was supporting me & therefore he wrote and inserted the article. There shall be no more of this thing, though it would give the affair too much importance formally to recall the article. Whether Benton be sincere or not, (I believe he is) I cannot perceive the necessity for assailing him and thus affording him a reason or a pretext for keeping his electoral ticket in the field. Governor Price voluntarily assured me and pledged his honor for the event that if they could not compromise with their opponents, they would withdraw their ticket. In a short time Col. Benton's sincerity must be tested. I presume it is not intended to drive from my support all who do not agree with the platform with which I am identified heart and soul, & who prefer me rather than support a Know-Nothing or a disunionist. There are very many such among the old whig party in this State.

Maryland is a prodigy. The Black Republicans here calculate upon the vote for Fillmore with perfect confidence. Their hope is that I will have sufficient strength in the South to carry the election into the House & then they would consider Fremont's election as certain. Fillmore has not the most remote chance of any northern State. He will not get an electoral vote in the union, unless it be in the South. Under these circumstances, is it not amazing that the old line whigs of Maryland should play into the hands of the abolitionists and disunionists.

I speak of Maryland particularly—because the Black Republicans speak of it in such a manner as to induce a belief that they have some real foundation for their hopes. In case of a dissolution of the Union, which Heaven forbid, Maryland & Pennsylvania would most probably be frontier

States; & whilst we and generations yet to come would have bitter cause to deplore the dreadful catastrophe, these two states would suffer more than any other members of the confederacy.

I regret very much that Mr. Crawford and yourself could not visit me as I had expected. Please to remember me to him very kindly & say I hope that both he & you may pay me a visit at a more convenient season for yourselves.

HOWELL COBB TO JOHN E. WARD¹

Washington City, 19 July, 1856.

Dear Ward:

I have thought but little and said less about the cabinet since I saw you. I think it best to let the matter rest until the election is over. There will be a great struggle about it, and our policy is to be uncommittal until we see how matters stand. I confess to you I have no personal wish about it, so far as my own name is concerned. Indeed, I have less and less desire every day for any such place, and I need not say, that your own appointment would be more acceptable to me than *any other man*.

At present things look badly at the north. The anti-slavery excitement is running high. There must be a reaction or all is lost. As to Fillmore, he is doing through his friends, all the harm at the South they can and no good at the North. Already have his friends united with the Black Republicans in Pa., for the Oct. elections, and it is said, will unite in an electoral ticket. I have faith in the people and cannot doubt Buchanan's election, but it looks stormy now. Fremont's election is a dissolution of the Union and when the north sees and feels that, there must be a reaction.

I leave in the morning to carry my family home but shall be back in a week.

¹ The Editor is indebted to the Librarian of the Wisconsin State Historical Society for a photostat of this letter.

HOWELL COBB TO HIS WIFE

Washington City, Dec. 1, 1856.

My dear Wife:

.As you might expect, all the talk here is about the cabinet of Mr. Buchanan and there are as many opinions and speculations here as you see in the newspapers. I have nothing authoritatively from Mr. Buchanan, but at the same time I am pretty well informed of the present state of the question at Wheatland. Mr. Buchanan has not as yet determined definitely upon any member of his cabinet, and will not before the first of February. I have no doubt that he will offer me a place in his cabinet, and I have as little that *he wants* me to take the only place that I would accept—the State Department. I am informed in a way that is perfectly satisfactory that he is more anxious on that point than upon any other. It has been extremely gratifying to me to hear and know that he expresses himself more cordially in reference to myself than to any other person. It is equally gratifying to see the feeling manifested in my favor from almost every quarter of the Union. It is worth more than all the offices in the Republic. My going into the cabinet I feel confident therefore is a question for my and *your* decision.

HOWELL COBB TO HIS WIFE.

Washington City, Dec. 17, 1856.

My dear Wife:

.I found things in Washington about as I left them. The politicians are all busy making a cabinet for Mr. Buchanan. The only additional point that I have learned since my return is this—Mr. Buchanan has been informed that I will take no place in his cabinet except the

State Department, and several of his personal friends have said to me that Mr. Buchanan has said to them that the only trouble he has, in making his cabinet is in fixing upon his Secretary of State. Now my inference is that he had fixed his mind upon the Treasury for myself, and is therefore embarrassed about the matter. This is my conjecture as I hear from all quarters that all his friends press upon him my appointment, and such is his own desire. Who it is that he is looking to for his Secretary of State, I cannot say, unless it is General Cass. Upon that point he preserves a remarkable silence, which is not broken to anyone. It is a matter that gives me no anxiety and but little thought, as I am personally quite indifferent whether I go into the cabinet or not. Knowing however that you want to know how the matter stands I write you all I know or think on the subject.

MRS. COBB TO HOWELL COBB.

Macon, Ga., Dec. 21, 1856.

My dear Husband:

. . . . I feel as if we will make a happy escape should we be left out of the Cabinet. Things having settled down so well at Athens relative to the College, and should we get a new, good teacher for boys, I am more inclined to stay at home and should Mr. B[uchanan] offer you any other place than the one you have said was the only one you would have, I shall be ready to rejoice over your decision to decline. Still, I want you to decide for yourself and not for me. I merely wish you to understand that my ambition is for you and not for myself, and I shall feel no mortification and disappointment for myself should you remain out of the Cabinet.

J. W. FORNEY¹ TO HOWELL COBB

Phila. Dec. 26, 1856.

My dear Cobb:

I owe you many apologies for not writing you on your return from Georgia; for I had much to say. Magruder did not tell me you desired to meet me, or I should have gone to Baltimore on eagle's wings.

There is one thing, my dear Cobb, that you are bound to do. *You must not desert your friends.* You will be to the National Democracy, their main pillow under Mr. B's administration. Without you I fear he may float into new hands and then Good-by to your friends. I am not authorized to speak. I only *know* that everybody here prays to God that Howell Cobb will go into the Cabinet, and without him many a good hearted friend will feel himself deserted. There is nothing selfish in you. I know not what Mr. Buchanan has in reserve for you, but he asked me, a few days ago, this question "If I take Gen. Cass as [Secretary of] State would Gov. Cobb go into my Cabinet?" I had seen Hart before you wrote me, and he told me that you said to him you would take the State Department alone, and this suggestion I had spoken of. But I answered Mr. B. "If Gov. Cobb is the man I take him for; if he desires to serve his friends; if he is anything to your administration; *he will.*" The good old man brightened up and said, "*I should be glad to know it.*"

From this I do not decide that you are out of the State; by no means. Your friends, active and devoted as men can be, are all for you for that; and Mr. B. himself looks to it for you; but if this is not done, for God's sake do not desert us, should the next position be offered. When you remember that the extreme South has yielded before the demand

¹ Editor of Philadelphia and Washington Papers; Clerk of the U. S. House of Representatives 1851-1856, as a Democrat; 1859-1861 as a Republican.

for your services and that those who assail you only injure themselves by doing so, and that the whole democracy of the North pray for you in the Cabinet, I am sure you ought not to hesitate. It would be so unlike you to do so, that I will not debate it with you for a moment. Should you refuse I should feel like giving up politics forever, and so would many others.¹

As to myself, I am hopeful but not nearly so confident as my friends are. Mr. B. is at work for me with much energy. . . .

¹ Cobb was offered the Secretaryship of the Treasury and accepted.

[THE COBB PAPERS will be continued in the September number of the Quarterly.]